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A NEW STAR.

To discover a poet—or rather to have him discover new susceptibilities in us, new avenues for us to noble satisfaction, to a faith, grounded on new experiences, in our own intrinsic right in definite development—this is but rarely the reward of him who scans industriously the frequent volumes of more or less skillful verse that keep appearing in America, apparently undiscouraged by the general lack of interest shown by the so-called reading public. Perhaps the reading public is cynical, having divined at whose cost such books are made and stacked up or sent abroad. The variety of indiscreet authors has resulted in a discreet public. The reviewers, desirous of honorably avoiding the pains of a critical perusal, have so long resorted to the expedient of indiscriminate praise of contemporary verse that the public is all the more rightly on its guard. Let us not crush a Keats unawares, they say; and the public cry “Amen!” and read little or no contemporary verse.

But the romance of discovering a poet! Who will not try and try again a thousand times, and find many and many a well-made book filled with jingling platitudes and hurdy-gurdy vaticinations and popgun bombast and saccharine sentimentalities if but once in a great while he have the pride and joy of discovering a poet? But it takes more courage to confess to the discovery than to be the poet discovered. Hence the critic who praises exuberantly is more of a hero, man of peace though he be, than many a medal-laden man of war.

But if one is to crow, let the crowing be done from a high spire, and loud, as loud as one's little voice will permit. So then “*Crux Ætatis, and Other Poems,*” by Martin Schutze (Boston, Richard C. Badger), is the new land—*island* or promontory of some vast continent, who at this date can say? We are not wiser than Columbus was. Still it is a new world;

of that we are as sure as he was. It has certain foreseen features? To be sure. If I say "Behold the golden sun," must I first apologize to Homer and Sophocles and Shakespeare, who may have said it before? Certainly not. Then let us for the while refrain from comparisons that are odious (or odorous—viz., malodorous) and not spend precious time in attempted classification, exposing of affinities and advertising of possible indebtedness. Our divine peddler has arrived with his own wares—altogether his own; and he asks for no pedigree, demands no references. His hands have made those wares—we can see his trade-mark in their very form and fashion and luster and material—honest wares of an honest man. His eye shines out of them; his touch caresses us through them; his soul overshadows them or enhaloes. Poet peddler, we will buy; and when you come this way again, knock hard at our door.

A first volume means anguish of soul. To represent the various selves of us! To leave no mouth of us mute! For, being poet, we are manifold, labyrinthine, and in "*Crux Ætatis*" the reader discerns two poets or three.

First, six sonnets, setting forth poetically a point of view, a criticism of the contemporary world, and a faith that transcends the criticism:

Think you that cunning, violence, and crime
Can ever be of Love and Truth the seed?

. . . Why clamor ye and call
Your brother's guilt—what is the law of all?

For all the speech of Evil is but one:
. . . "Crucify Him, crucify!"

And all the speech of Goodness is but one; . . .
It is a song of gladness and of faith. . . .
Of blessing: "Sanctify Him, sanctify!"

The series opens with a masterly sonnet, and closes with one equally fine. Both are sustained, virile, musical; not versified doctrine, but true vision, symbolic utterance; the first with nightmarelike power setting before us some modern Babylon, in which the Son of Man is systematically crucified; the last letting a huge freight train crash and roar up grade, and then

the holy still night supervene, with its marriage of earth and sky—the serenity of things eternal. A protest this against substitution of stage machinery and “business” for vital dramatic action, against the blatant arrogation of monopoly in power and splendor the volcanoes and geysers have been pressing of late, to the denial of the solid earth and the blue sky!

But Mr. Schutze is not merely a good protester in poetic terms against this hustle-bustle, head over heels to Topsy-turvydom which our materialistic age is so proud of exhibiting. He is more than a poet-protester; he is a creative prophet. He is more than a prophet; he is a magician that summons into being impossible worlds for the spirit’s delight.

A series of three sonnets entitled “Isolde,” expressing the emotive experiences that the music compelled out of the ocean depths of the soul to the surface of unquiet consciousness, ends with a masterpiece that requires many readings for full appreciation. Not a matter of logic is truth, neither deductive nor inductive. Vision is truth—immediate vision. But let us quote the sonnet, so full of poetic vitality that any analysis thereof is a criminal vivisection:

Truth I beheld, a shimmering island, dim
Within a streaming, hazy veil of sense,
Where all the solemn idols of pretense,
The frowning specters of historic whim,
Creatures of rote-begotten wisdom, grim
Judges of guilt and makeshift recompense
Are but cloud-phantoms on the horizon whence
They mutter, gloom, sink 'neath the violet rim—
Where life is as the blowing of the flowers,
A fervent dream; a rapture 'neath the wing
Of the white moth of passion, quivering,
Through purple-eyed desirous twilight hours,
And then—fragrance passing in the streams
Of mingling summer-dreams, Midsummer-dreams. . . .

What a prophet’s inquisitorial torture did not our poet subject the moral life to ere he penned “Monochord” and “Again Your Eye.” The horror of soul to soul; the damnation of disillusion; the destroyer and the creator in one. No less terrible when through the eyes of a beloved woman, scanning us inscrutable. The sphinx of the sun god at the dawn, the desert shuddering in all its sands. Those are two

poems not easily forgotten, even by the casual reader; awful with a moral seriousness like the thunders of the Mount, penetrant like the lightnings, persistent as the night with its myriad starry witnesses of our human crawl over the earth.

But probably Mr. Schutze is at his best when, as in "The Three Moons," he appears "high hierophant, divine magician," and gives us new experiences—symphonies of vision, hallucinatory in vividness, haunting, "where more is meant than meets the ear"—through which the soul has intimations of its own unspeakable life. From this dream poem to quote is out of the question. It is a whole and must be read as a whole. But the poem itself is only partially on the paper. The written poem is like the sign of the macrocosm—a potent sign. Not what it signifies to the rationalistic intellect, but what it "summons from the vasty deep"—that is its worth and glory. To give us genuine and lovely incantations is no mean service in our poet. But in simpler landscape language also, as a painter, he can do for us something similar in his "Silver-Gray," "Interface," "Gloom Folk," and "The Double" are similar in power and mode of conception, but very much somberer in mood. "Interface" we will quote as a whole:

Through the summer ballroom window
Rolls the ancient tune of the sea;
Within, an old waltz is playing
That waves and sways as the sea.
Like a phantom tide, the sea-mist
The heated fragrance drowns;
The swish of the sea steals into
The ripples of frothy gowns.
Round bushes, huddled and anxious,
As they cling to the hem of the night,
And trees, wind-worn and haggard,
Press close to the circle of light.
They seem forever approaching;
They seem forever to fly;
They seem forever pleading;
They seem forever to spy.
Through the light from within, dew-filtered,
Glimmers the starry sky,
Far and faint, mist-shrouded,
As eyes of memory.

But let it not be supposed our poet can be only a poet-protester, creative poet, and high hierophant and arch magician; he can cry out as common mortals, in "Day-after-Day,"

O, drive once more from the beaten brain
The grizzled horror of day-after-day;
O, clear from the smothered heart again
The cumulant dregs of day-after-day—

with three more stanzas that must ring and ring in the heart of the man most innocent of the intricacies of poetic counterpoint. And "The Gale," who cannot declaim down the wind with a gathering joy in rhythm—beginning with such a breezy stanza as this:

The bees hang under the blossoms' lee,
By bonds invisible anchored there;
Birds cling to yonder shuddering tree,
All heading the same way;
The swallows wheel and scream with glee
Mid apple blossoms whirling gay;
Spindrift comes scudding over the sea
Into your fluttering hair.

And love poetry, simple, delicately ardent, with holy innocence and frankness—such as "Evening" and "Song" furnish us—surely no pundits need be sought for in India to help us to understand. "The Singer," a little dramatic lyric, the utterance of an ephemeris on the stage, is so Blakelike in its delicacy as to escape and become difficult through sheer unaffected simplicity. "The Tree," on the other hand, through its restraint and deliberate avoidance of vaticinal fury, may not to the casual reader seem more than an inane trifle:

Each Springtide of new impulse rent
The fibers, lesser passions wove;
Fluted with deepening scars, it strove
Till the long urge of life was spent.
When man the perfect shaft beheld,
Who anguish for each triumph paid,
Its image out of stone be made,
Which his mute aspirations spelled.

But if one single poem should be preferred to all the rest, fearlessly my ballot would be cast for "Autumn Gypsy." It is in its own tones as full of landscape painting as "Silver-Gray," as full of sheer magical elicitation and evocation as "The Three

Moons." It has a unity not merely of sequence in symbol visions, as the latter, and it has variety such as the former precludes. The "Gypsy," with her golden hair, met in the warm October; beloved mysteriously at first beholding; her song of natural enchantment; the secret place by the brook; the bath in fearless, peerless loveliness; the twilight and love's mysteries; the dome of peace above, and the sleeping peace of her glimmering face; the waking in the "chill gray dawn" to find her gone—

And I have wandered the whole world through,
Seeking her everywhere,
And ever above the hill in the blue
Was a glimpse of her golden hair; . . .

the effort to court in solitude her return; and ever, ever the golden gleam just

Where the last light kisses, long and still,
The crown of a maple tree.

This sequence of impressions, devout beads strung on the delicate string of the visionary gypsy, makes a poem that the most exoteric verse-sensationalist must enjoy, the most conventional critic condone, and the esoteric seeker after *beauteous* utterances of the divine-human unutterable revel in "many a tune and oft." Other poems there are some readers may prefer to those singled out in this paper for commendation. "Through the Sober Window" or "October Woods" may win favor with some, or "Fall Exuberance" or "Continuity" may be preferred to "The Gale." Always, always the personal equation. So be it. And if I utter strongly my like, it is to challenge my reader to utter his own. If our strong likes are not identical, so much the better for the poet, who is richer than either of us would have surmised by the effect on his single self.

But unless a reviewer taps a poet on the fingers with a pedantic rod several times he is presumed not to understand his business. The reviewer, mind you, is not to recommend a book he has taken delight in to a possible new enjoyer. No, he is to educate the poet for greater successes. Having himself done masterpieces, he can make the way unto such performances plain for the youngling; he can shoe him afresh with special

winged sandals of his own excogitation for the next more promising excursions Olympusward! So, out with the credentials of this reviewer. Poet, prepare thy knuckles. The rod comes out of pickle quick as an adder's tongue. Sonnet II. has a weak last line rhythmically. The cadence is wrong. Does any one know what cadence meean's? Not specifically, but the word is learnedly impressive. Sonnet II. of the "Isolde" series closes its octave with a painful note, "voice's harmony." "As sullen 'hind its leering spies it cowers" is out of the question in "The Turn of the Wheel," and perhaps the whole sonnet should go into outer darkness.

Seriously, is it necessary to hunt for the motes in the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling, when most of us know our beams would furnish sleepers for a dozen miles of four-track standard railroad? Is finicalness the hall mark of honesty? So we will assure the reader, harsh combinations of sound, failures in cadence, unsolved problems of diction are to be found if such finds reward the microscopic inspector. For our part, knowing the rarity of perfection, the volume has astonished by its technical assurance, its felicities of diction, its rhythmic onomatopœia, its marriage of form and matter, thought and feeling. But even were our poet less distinguished a technician than he most assuredly is, the imaginative vitality, the lyric verve, the pictorial power, the rare culture atmosphere, the high manly, moral seriousness, the childlike purity of feeling and directness of perception, the psychological insights and spiritual divinations, all so unconsciously, graciously evidenced in the compass of these fifty-four pages of verse, would place us already very deeply in his debt. Quality, not quantity; spirit, not letter. But if the letter be good also, not murderous, but life-giving; and the quantity be (considering always the scarcity of good work) considerable, let us close with an honest word of thanks to the poet and self-congratulation to ourself for having discovered him—that is, having been shrewd enough to have him discover us at the cost of a few hours' pleasurable pains.

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